

THE TOWN OF LAUREL PARK

Official Newsletter

www.laurelpark.org

Hurricane Helene & FEMA Update from Town Manager Reeves

September 27th:

Western North Carolina was devastated by Hurricane Helene.

October 15th:

The first step was to record what and where damage occurred. An inventory of damage was drafted by Town Engineer Buie for public roads and infrastructure. The Town's initial estimate was between \$5 and \$10 million dollars. For reference, the annual operating budget for the Town of Laurel Park is roughly \$4.6 million dollars. With numbers like these, the Town found itself ***completely*** dependent on public assistance from other government agencies to fund these permanent repairs.

November 12th:

The first visit by FEMA and NC Department of Emergency Management (NCEM). This meeting kicked off the Town's recovery efforts. We were just discovering how the wildly complicated process would look, and the required steps ***if*** the Town were to seek reimbursement from the federal and state government.

December 2nd - 6th:

Laurel Park was the first municipality in the region to set up and have site inspections.

FEMA and NCEM began site inspections which, is the prescribed next step for funding eligibility. Out of the 56 mapped areas, we only scratched the surface by visiting 16 within that week. Accurate identification of the damages and repairs needed is the foundation to establishing the amount of funding requested from FEMA and NCEM.

The new year came and went without the state or federal government providing cash flow via grants, loans, or funds for the region to begin building.

January 3rd:

The Town requested proposals for engineering services. The award granting took longer than anticipated because of federal and state procurement policies. The next step is having the engineers draft scopes of work for repairing and mitigating each and every damaged area.

February 17th:

The Town requested proposals for landscape architecture services. Once we have this contract secured, we can begin assessing and estimating repairs for the parks and municipal buildings.

The Town scheduled 15 more site inspection dates for February and March. Something important to note here is that FEMA site inspections can only occur every other weekday.

February 24th:

The Department of State Treasurer announce the first round of interest-free loans for Hurricane Helene relief to local governments and more checks from that tranche are forthcoming soon. I am proud to report that Laurel Park applied in time and received about \$1.5 million dollars to begin addressing some of the areas that are affecting life, safety, and property.

Those brief highlights bring us to today. We hear and understand the frustrations from our community. What I want to announce is simple: Your Town staff and officials are doing everything in our power to restore our beautiful town on a mountain. Unfortunately, we are at the mercy of funds that are not in our coffers. Cities and towns across Western North Carolina continue to face tremendous challenges rebuilding from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Helene, and most of us are dealing with financial hurdles as a result. Even as federal and other state resources are made available over time, municipalities have expenses that must be paid now to help residents recover. The average reimbursement time for FEMA is 632 days. I will give that a moment to sink in because this is proving to be the biggest hurdle yet. Every step of progress is slow, but meaningful. If Town staff and contractors are not careful to follow all of FEMA AND NCEM's requirements, the Town's public assistance request will be denied, and our taxpayers would be liable for making up the difference.

Please respect the challenges your community leaders face with unprecedented financial constraints and staff capacity as they relate to service demands.



Town Contact Information

Town Hall (828) 693-4840

9:00 am - 5:00 pm Monday to Friday

Police Non Emergency (828) 692-9399

Valley Hill Fire (828) 692-2581



Mayor: J. Carey O'Cain

Mayor Pro-Tem: A. Paul Hansen

Commissioners:

George W. Banta

Travis Bonnema

Debra H. Bridges

Town Manager: Cara R. Reeves

Town Clerk: Stephanie Banks

Finance: Cortney Kidd

Police Chief: Bobbie Trotter

Public Works: Brandon Johnson



MAYBIN'S

A division of Kirby Sanitation

☎ 828-692-9872

maybinsgarbage.com

A FEW REMINDERS

If a holiday falls on a service day, the service day and all days following it that week are delayed one day. For example, if a holiday falls on Tuesday,

Tuesday service would happen on Wednesday, Wednesday on Thursday, and Thursday on Friday.

To avoid missed collections, please ensure your trash is out by 6:00 am. Please put your cans up by end of day on the day of collection.

Please make sure all blue recycling bags are securely tied (not cinched shut) to ensure they will be picked up.

At Maybin's request, please call their office if your garbage did not get picked up!



HELP US KEEP YOU CONNECTED!

Stay up-to-date with Laurel Park notices or cancellations by signing up for Blackboard

Connect. <https://laurelparknc.bbcportal.com>

If you have already signed up, but are not receiving notifications, please call or stop by Town Hall to ensure we have the correct contact information for you!

Public Meeting Schedule

-Please check on the website for up-to-date meeting changes prior to attending-

Town Council Work Session

March 13 at 9:30 am

April 10 at 9:30 am

Town Council Regular Meeting

March 18 at 9:30 am

April 15 at 9:30

Planning Board

March 11 at 3:00 pm

April 8 at 3:00 pm

Parks & Greenways Board

March 11 at 9:30 am

April 8 at 9:30 am

ABC Board

March 25 at 8:30 am

April 22 at 8:30 am

Invasive Species Committe

March 5 at 10:00 am

April 2 at 10:00 am

Centennial Committee

March 10 at 11:30 am

April 14 at 11:30 am

Bee Committee

March 18 at 4:30 pm

April 15 at 4:30 pm

Bicycle Committee

March 10 at 3:00 pm

April 14 at 3:00 pm

Board of Adjustment

March 13 at 4:00 pm

CALENDAR

March 1 at 6:00 pm

State of the Town Dinner
Hendersonville Country Club

March 4 at 6:30 pm

Community Education Class
hosted by LP Police

March 15 at 6:30 pm

Friends of Laurel Park Concert
Echo Mountain Inn

April 1 at 6:30 pm

Community Education Class
hosted by LP Police

April 10 at 5:00 pm

Friends of Laurel Park Concert
Laurel Green Park

April 18 - Town Hall Closed

In observance of Good Friday



Friends of Laurel Park

The Friends of Laurel Park is proud to sponsor their free 2025 winter concerts!

Saturday March 15 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm at Echo Mountain Inn

A special evening with the band, “Kap’n Kirk and Crew”. Beer and wine will be available at the cash bar.

Thursday April 10 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at Laurel Green Park

Join us for a rocking evening with the band, “Highway 52”. Food truck will be provided. Rain date April 17.

Saturday May 10 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at Laurel Green Park

A special musical treat will be provided by the “Hendersonville Symphony Orchestra Brass Quintet”. Food truck will be provided.

For event updates, sign up for emails or volunteer opportunities please visit www.friendsoflaurelpark.org.



Join The Hunt!

Are you ready to try the summer scavenger hunt? As part of our 2025 centennial celebrations, the centennial committee has developed a historical scavenger hunt. The Scavenger Hunt booklet is available at the town office and contains all the directions for you to successfully finish the hunt. Pick one up and begin searching for the answers on the town’s 22 historical markers near the roadways throughout our mountain.

A beautiful commemorative centennial coin medallion will be awarded to every family that completes the booklet. If you can manipulate the answers in a math formula provided, you have a chance at winning some nice gift cards from area Laurel Park businesses as well.

Although the scavenger hunt can be attempted throughout the year, prizes will first be awarded at our centennial picnic on July 5th at Laurel Green Park.



Bee City Committee

The Bee City Committee would like the residents to use these postcards below as a reminder when purchasing plants for their spring gardens in order to create a pesticide-free zone in their yards for our bees.

Postcards are available as a download from the Xerces Society website.

xerces.org/pesticides/bee-safe-nursery-plants

XERCES SOCIETY
For Invertebrate Conservation

SIMPLE STEPS FOR BUYING BEE-SAFE PLANTS

- 1 Seek out organic plants and seeds.
- 2 Avoid plants grown with neonicotinoids and other similar systemic insecticides.
- 3 Ask what steps your nursery takes to offer plants grown using pollinator-friendly pest management.

Are you planting a pollinator garden? If so, talk to your nursery about pollinator-friendly practices. Many nurseries commonly use pesticides, some harmful to bees. Take the time to let your nursery know you want plants free from harmful pesticide residues.

For more information on nursery pest management and growing bee-safe plants, visit xerces.org/pesticides/bee-safe-nursery-plants



Rhododendron Lake Nature Park

Hurricane Helene inflicted significant damage upon Rhododendron Lake Nature Park, including the infrastructure and natural features of the park.

FEMA is our primary partner in the assessment of damage and funding for the restoration. The Town is awaiting final analysis from FEMA before any active restoration efforts may begin. FEMA has not provided a timeline for completions of these tasks.

As we await a final FEMA assessment, Rhododendron Lake Nature Park remains closed due to unsafe conditions. When and if the Parks & Greenways Board receive relevant updates from FEMA, we will ensure that information is communicated to the residents of Laurel Park. Please do not enter the park as the trails are unsafe and the ground is unstable.

Invasive Species Committee



Invasive Plant Observation
Sweet - Breath - of Spring
Lonicera fragrantissima
Honeysuckle family



As of February 8, this shrub species from the Honeysuckle family, has started blooming in Laurel Park. It is very fragrant and is listed as an invasive by the NC Invasive Plant Council. A description and additional photos can be found online in the Flora of the Southeastern United States using this link. www.fsus.ncbg.unc.edu

Influence of Hurricane Helene on Invasives

The increase in sunlight and open ground due to tree/canopy loss, provides fertile ground for invasive vine to infest. As trees fell, fragments of vines have spread with the potential to reestablish in the spring. As warm weather approaches, be on the lookout for new infestations of English ivy and other invasive vines.



The “Why” of Invasive Vine Removal

Laurel Park is home to many native species including trees, understory shrubs/bushes, and small, rare herbs. The aggressive growth of invasives is a threat to our native plants. Unchecked, the invasives can become the dominant species in our plant communities and reduce the populations of desirable and rare plants.

Identification and classification of native/non-native plants in Laurel Park is a key first step in management of invasives. If you have experience or interest in plant identification/taxonomy, please contact a member of the Committee, including John McGregor (john@jtmcgregor.com) and Laurel Crowell (laurellcrowell@gmail.com).



VALLEY HILL FIRE RESCUE



The leading cause of home clothes dryer fires is failure to clean them!

Clean the lint filter before or after each load of laundry. Remove the lint that has collected around the drum.

Keep the area around your dryer clear of things that can burn, like boxes, cleaning supplies and clothing.



**DON'T LET YOUR DRYER
START A FIRE...**



Most cooking fires in the home involve the stovetop!

Keep anything that can catch fire - oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels, or curtains away from the stovetop.

Always stay in the kitchen when frying on the stovetop.

Extension cord fires outnumbered fires beginning with permanent or detachable power cords by two-to one!

Check electrical cords to make sure they are not running across doorways or under carpets. Extension cords are intended for temporary use.

Have a qualified electrician add more receptacle outlets so you don't have to use extension cords.



If you have any questions or concerns, please contact

Fire and Life Safety Officer

Chris McDowell

(828) 692-2581 ext. 105



Laurel Park Police Department will Host Community Education Classes



The Laurel Park Police Department has successfully hosted two years of community educational classes. In our third year, we will be taking a hybrid approach. We enjoy talking about all police matters, but we feel the residents of Laurel Park should be given the opportunity to hear about matters of the Town, as well. The classes will begin at 6:30 pm on the 1st Tuesday of every month, March through September in the Meeting Room at Laurel Park Town Hall, 441 White Pine Drive. There will be not class in July.

- March 4th: Meet & Greet: Meet Staff and Learn about Town Services
- April 1st: Boards & Committees: What do they do? How can I help?
- May 6th: Wildlife: Updates & Feedback
- June 3rd: Scams: Don't be a Victim
- August 5th: Personal Safety: Be Prepared
- September 2nd: Home Security: Different Times

For more information, and to sign up for the class, please contact Officer Erich Junger at ejunger@laurelpark.org or by phone at (828) 692-9399.

Stay in the Laurel Park Loop!



Find us on Facebook
Town of Laurel Park,
North Carolina

BLACKBOARD CONNECT

Follow this link and sign up to be notified
of special events, Town emergencies, garbage
changes by email or text
<https://laurelparknc.bbcpportal.com/>



Meeting agendas and minutes
can be found on our website
www.laurelpark.org
select the "Government" tab,
then choose "Agendas & Minutes"

Welcome to the Team!



Stephanie Banks
Town Clerk



Cheryl Hensley
Resident Services
Representative



Employment Opportunities

Assistant to the Town Manager /
Zoning Administrator

Police Officer

Streets Maintenance Technician

For an application, please visit our
website: www.laurelpark.org.

Laurel Park Advisory Boards Opportunities

The Town of Laurel Park recognizes and celebrates the diversity of our Town and encourages all individuals to apply to serve on board-appointed committees.

To apply, please contact Town Clerk, Stephanie Banks or visit our website. www.laurelpark.org

Did You Know...

You can request Leaf Pickup,
a House Check

or

Report a Street / Road Issue

or

Submit a Public Comment
from our website?

Just go to

www.laurelpark.org/forms
